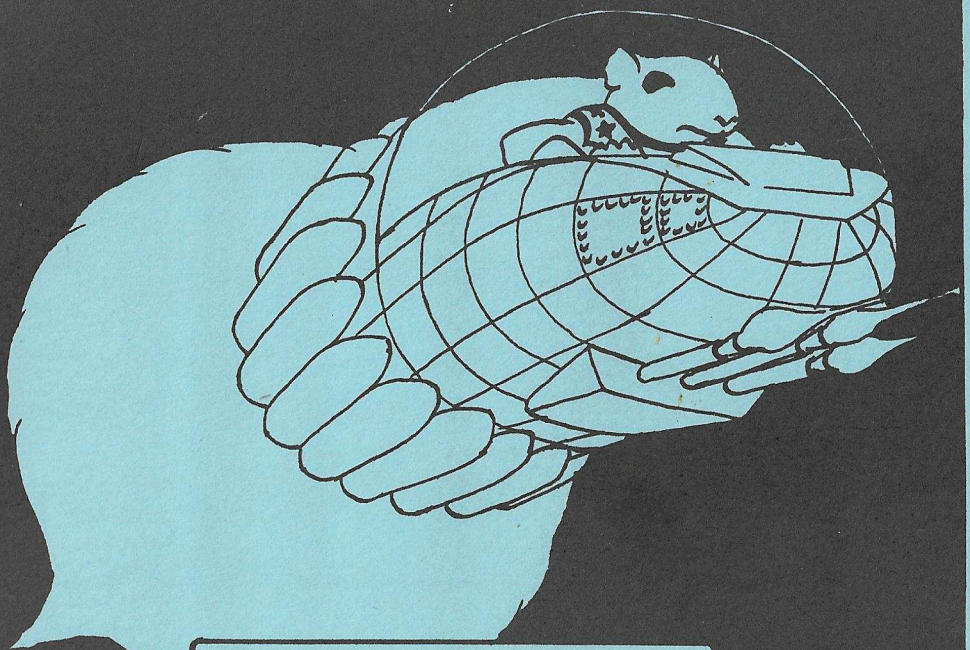
THE SERIES CONTINUES THROUGH COMMANDER PERRY RHODAN'S PET GERBIL

PERRY RODENT

42,333,333.

UNIVERSE OF CHEESE

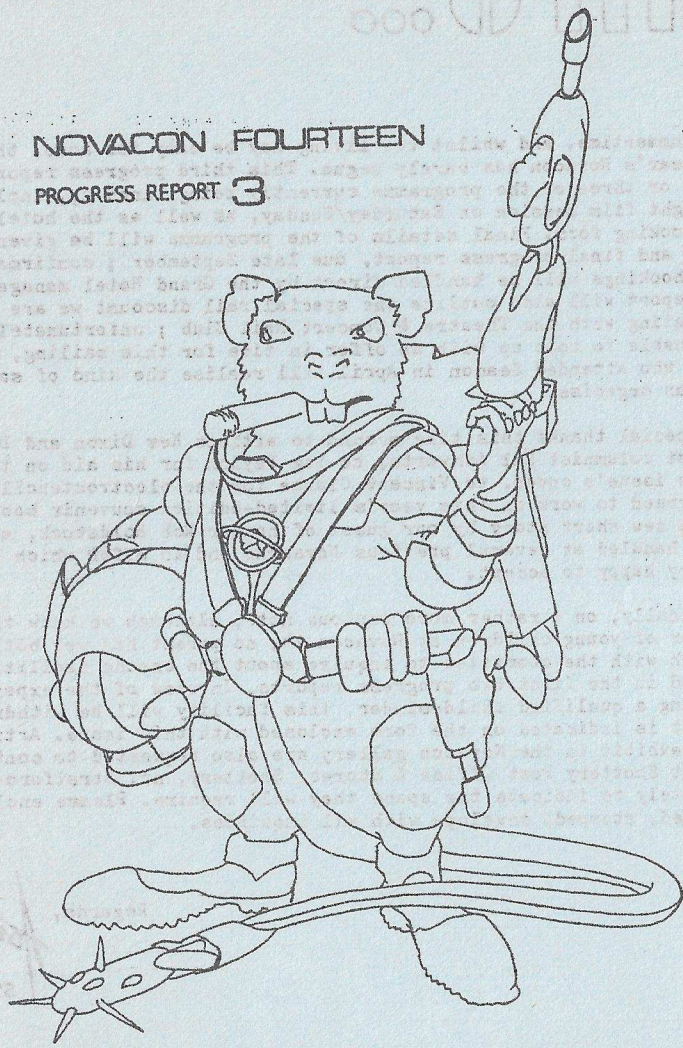


NOVACON 14

PROGRESS REPORT 3

NOVACON FOURTEEN

PROGRESS REPORT 3



Novacon 14, the thirteenth annual convention of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group, will be held at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham, on November 9 - 11, 1984. The guest of honour is Rob Holdstock ; membership is £6, payable to "Novacon 14" c/o Ann Green, 11, Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7SD (£7 on the door). This progress report was produced by Steve Green and Eunice Pearson and printed on the Gutter Press ; cover art by Kev Dixon, interior art by Kev Dixon, Dave Haden.

Introd...

Summertime, and whilst the living may be easy for some, the work on this year's Novacon has barely begun. This third progress report contains a hint or three of the programme currently being lined up, including an all-night film session on Saturday/Sunday, as well as the hotel accomodation booking form. Final details of the programme will be given in the fourth and final progress report, due late September ; confirmations of hotel bookings will be handled direct by the Grand Hotel management. The next report will also outline the special rail discount we are presently negotiating with the Theatre & Concert Rail Club ; unfortunately, they were unable to come up with an offer in time for this mailing, but those of you who attended Seacon in April will realise the kind of savings the club can organise.

Special thanks this time around to artists Kev Dixon and Dave Haden, to guest columnist Mal Ashworth, to Rog Peyton for his aid on the printing of this issue's cover, to Vincent Clarke for the electrostencils. Rog has also agreed to work on this year's limited-edition souvenir booklet, featuring a new short story by our guest of honour Rob Holdstock, a task which he has handled at several previous Novacons and an offer which the committee was very happy to accept.

Finally, on a rather more serious note, although we know there will be a number of young children at Novacon 14, no parent has yet bothered to get in touch with the committee to inquire about the creche facilities which we outlined in the first two progress reports. In view of the expense involved in hiring a qualified child-minder, this facility will be withdrawn unless interest is indicated on the form enclosed with this issue. Artists intending to exhibit in the Novacon gallery are also requested to contact Dave Haden at Shottery Post Office & Stores, Shottery, nr. Stratford-upon-Avon, immediately to indicate the space they will require. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped, envelope with all inquiries.

Regards,

STEVE GREEN
Chairman

Novacon Fourteen Committee:
Steve Green, chairman ; Martin Tudor, vice-chairman ; Paul Vincent, treasurer ; Ann Green, registrations ; Dave Haden, artshow ; Kevin Clarke, fan lounge, main programme games ; Eunice Pearson, publications.

lounge

Although Novacon 14 will not be running an alternative programme as such, there will be an alternative to the main hall activities, the convention's fan lounge. Organiser Kev Clarke outlines his plans:

"The fan lounge at Novacon is intended for those who enjoy a chance to relax in an informal, fannish atmosphere with a drink and friends.

"The programming will be extremely low-key, so as not to interfere with the free flow of alcohol and conversation, and will principally include light-hearted, off-the-cuff talks from several BNFs and WKFs.

"The fan lounge bar will be open throughout most of the convention, and will even serve real cask-conditioned ale.

"Finally, the wall displays (an important part of any fanroom) will include British and European fanac charts, the Fannish Year Photographic Competition (prizes for single photo and set of photos best capturing the spirit of fandom -- send your prints now), the new, improved black-mail board (let us exhibit your most incriminating exposures), Nova and COFF voting centres, and other varied and interesting items.

"All contributions for display will be returned intact after the convention."

info

Information on all aspects of the convention is available from the following committee members. Please enclose an s.a.s.e. for reply.

Programme

Steve Green, 11, Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham.
Martin Tudor, 845, Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham.

Fan Lounge

Kevin Clarke, 438, Station Road, Dorridge, Solihull, West Midlands.

Registrations

Ann Green, see address above.

Artshow

Dave Haden, Shottery P.O. & Stores, Shottery, near Stratford-on-Avon.

THE INCISOR AND OTHERS

by MAL ASHWORTH

Episode One:
"I Get the Teeth ... and the Taste"

"Manchester won the bid for the 1954 Eastercon ... but that is another story" was how Dave Wood concluded his reminiscences in progress report 2. That convention, the 'Supermancon', was the one I came to refer to as 'My First Real Convention'. If you hold still and stop picking your belly-button I'll tell you something about it. But first let me tell you about everything else under the sun. Including teeth. Especially teeth.

I guess it was those old photographs that got me started on that train of thought. Two of them, not separated by more than a few months in time, but both with that indefinable something which marks them as photographs of Then, very definitely not of Now. (The raincoats flapping around the ankles? The Bela Lugosi hairstyles? The fatuous early '50s smiles that seemed to say "Well, no, we haven't got that much to smile about right now, but then it is only seven years since we won the war, and in another year or two -- wow!"?) In one of these, a group of grinning, lightly-lobotomised zombies stands in some desolate grounds, possibly a post-holocaust holiday resort. In the other, a group of grinning, lightly-lobotomised zombies stands in a desolate hall, possibly a post-holocaust Hilton hotel. With the exception of one being, apparently some sort of apprentice wolfman, who seems to have had rather the worst of a duel-to-the-death with a vat of Brylcream, the two groups are different. The first shows my elder brother's wedding reception, the second shows the Bradford Science Fiction Association at the one-day Manchester convention in 1952, and is the first-ever photograph of little me as a *Fan* ("'Little me'?", I hear you gasp. Well, yes -- in the photograph I'm standing next to Derek Pickles who, apart from having a way with money like a magnet has with iron-filings, was our local Big Name Fan in more ways than one.) But the teeth, I hear you cry, what about the teeth? Tush, is there no end to these insatiable demands? Oh, very well then...

Some while before my brother's wedding, at which I was to be Best Man, I took the unprecedented step, for anyone in our family, of visiting the dentist. I was 19 at the time. I sat in the comfy chair and comfily opened my mouth... I have come to believe subsequently that the dentist must have watched even more classic horror films than I had ; to reel across the room like that, arm in front of face, as though confronted by the Horror from the Makeup Studios was surely rather overdoing things! "They'll all have to come out," he finally whispered feebly from the far wall. "Aaasrrrhhh," I badmouthed, closing the abyss which seemed to have caused him such distress before he could come up with a variation on the old joke and add "-the gums as well". An exciting scenario then unfolded over the ensuing weeks ; exciting but, as they say, stupid, in that the timing could hardly have been worse. The climax of the whole business is caught in that once-seen-never-to-be-forgotten wedding reception photograph where, looming over some mouse-like little woman in the front row (who seems to have had no connection with any branch of the family and hence would never have been missed) is a grimacing monstrosity which can only be one of Victor Frankenstein's earliest prototypes before he got the bugs ironed out. You certainly wouldn't give a barrel-of-Real-Ale-in-a-fanroom's-chance of little Mrs. Blissfully Unaware in the front row there getting out of it still in possession of her head and

her new hat, even if she managed to save her tightly-clutched handbag. But things are often not what they seem and since, only the previous day, my devastated dentist had won a resounding victory in the return match by filling my mouth -- apparently permanently -- with all the larger left-overs of the infant British plastics industry. I not only hadn't been able to deliver a scintillating Best Man type speech, I hadn't even managed to get the better of an overly-friendly lettuce leaf which kept me close company for the rest of the day, neatly wrapping my upper set in what felt like several layers of chlorophyll-impregnated plastic. I was thus in no position, even though very much in the right frame of mind, to beat the photographer to capturing Daisy Dewdrop's simpering smile. You've heard of a total solar eclipse ; it seems that what I had tangled with was not only rarer but much more devastating -- a total molar eclipse.

All of which led me to think, glancing at the other photograph, that attending your first convention is probably a bit like cutting your first tooth, except that you're usually -- though not necessarily -- a year or so older when you do the former, a view supported by the fact that the rather gauche report I wrote of the day (for Dave Wood and Ken Potter's Brennschluss) is mainly an account of what I did with my dark-haired, cuddly girlfriend on the next-to-the-back seat of the coach from Bradford to Manchester and Manchester to Bradford. The detail, I fear, would only bore you so I won't recount it ; the most interesting feature, in fact, is the one that isn't there, rather like the dog that didn't bark in the Sherlock Holmes story. Nowhere is there any mention of my curvy little preoccupation having her nose bitten off in a misdirected soul-kiss, which suggests to me that I must have gotten my new teeth pretty much under control by then. I can't honestly claim to remember much about the convention itself but, despite its artistic shortcomings, this purple carbon-copy tells an interesting tale. For one thing, it seems we had our equivalent of Trekkies even way back then ; hist -- "I hadn't been able to get the back seat ((on the coach)) as this had been bagged by Vargo Statten fans who wanted to stick slogans like 'Up With Vargo Statten' ((no OBVIOUS rude comments, please ; after all they could have been Bengo Mistral fans)) and other such subtlet-ties on the back window". On the way Derek Pickles sold us copies of the first issue of the new British sf mag Nebula. The convention itself featured lapel badges, dealers' stalls, programme items re-arranged (in a one day con, even) and, obviously, that distinctive memory-warping I've also got from every subsequent con I've ever been to. It seems there was a talk on silicon slugs (the mineral, not the convention ; this was a l-o-o-n-g before the real Silicon), one on 'Fandom' by Michael Rosenblum, a play about the first man on the Moon, fantasy charades, an auction, John Brunner talking on Nebula, AND -- Vargo Statten, albeit in his other-worldly guise as the mild and inconspicuous John Russell Fearn ("I don't think our pet VS fans could get used to to the idea that Vargo Statten wasn't his REAL name"). It seems that John Brunner asked him if he had ever plagarised anyone else's stories and he very honestly said no, just their ideas. He then showed a film of his own making called 'Black Satur-day', with Blackpool beach doubling up for Mars and (it rather uncharitably says here) "part of the Solar System blocked out by a large triangular hunk of black cheese and ... a pepper-pot rocketship (taking) off from the Earth at about six miles an hour". All told, a pretty praiseworthy one-day pro-gramme is my verdict as mellowed through 32 years of hindsight ('kindly hindsight', of course). And it apparently not only cut my fannish teeth, but also whetted my appetite for more (dig these crystal-keen metaphors, if you please.)

Missing the '53 Coroncon in London, less from fear of a heart-attack than from a crippling lack of moolah (around our neck of the woods we used to borrow from the church mice towards the end of the week), I set my sights on the '54 Supermancon which was to be no mere one-day affair but a proper stop-over con -- a real convention !

TO BE CONTINUED

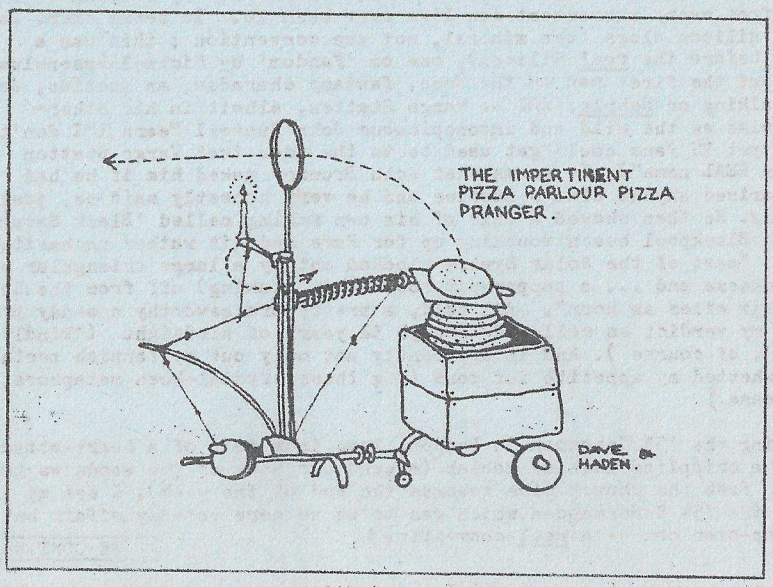
games

No one who was present at Novacon 13's alternative programme could easily forget the insane trail of self-destruction left by the competitors in Kev Clarke's 'Bollockbusters' championship. Who better than he, then, to run this year's follow-up, 'The Krapton Factor' ? Kev himself takes up the story:

"Following the success of last year's Celebrity Bollockbusters, Novacon 14 now unveils its sequel. We require eight groups from across the country to each volunteer three of their members for subjection to a new and improved range of ordeals designed to inflict maximum embarassment on the hapless victims.

"Yes, folks, if you are the sort of person who enjoys wrestling in curry, or fighting your opponents armed only with a beer-soaked pillow, then the Krapton Factor is for you !"

Entry forms are included on the convention facility form enclosed with this progress report.



films

One of the highlights of every Novacon is the extensive and varied film programming, a showcase for classic movies and works deserving of wider recognition rather than the latest box office smashes.

Novacon 14 will be taking this one step further by running an all-night session on Saturday/Sunday. Several films have yet to be confirmed, including one major feature, but the nine movies will include:

FAILSAFE:
Sidney Lumet's classic nuclear thriller, still as relevant as when first screened in 1964. Henry Fonda stars as the US president forced to choose between the destruction of New York and full-scale nuclear war after an American bomber accidently annihilates Moscow ; the cast also includes Dan O'Herlihy and Walter Matthau. Based on a novel by Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler.

PHANTASM:
Superb tongue-in-cheek sf/horror offering from Don Coscarelli, recently responsible for the fantasy yarn BEASTMASTER. Bodysnatching aliens, blood-sucking spheres and homicidal midgets -- all in the best possible taste.

THEM!:
Just the film for anyone who's spent the summer trying to fight off an insect invasion in their kitchen. Gordon Douglas directs armies of giant mutant ants as they over-run Southern California ; only James Whitmore can save the state in time for it to be laid waste by the Democrat party elections.

CATCH-22:
Surrealist black comedy based on Joseph Heller's bestselling war novel, tranferred to the screen by Mike Nichols, previously responsible for THE GRADUATE and CARNAL KNOWLEDGE. All-star cast includes Alan Arkin, Martin Sheen, Orson Welles, Bob Newhart, Jon Voight, Richard Benjamin, Anthony Perkins, Art Garfunkel.

ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW:
Cult classic from box office smash musical, directed by Jim Sharman and starring author Richard O'Brien, Tim Curry, Barry Bostwick, Meatloaf, Susan Sarandon, Charles Gray. Inspired sequel SHOCK TREATMENT, but this sadly lacked the perverse flair of the original.
Although Novacon 14 will not be running an adult fancy dress parade as such, spot prizes will be awarded to the best costumes worn during the screening of ROCKY HORROR, which will take place after the Brum Group's party.

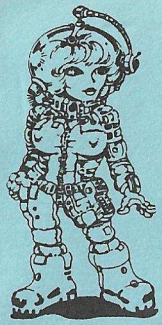
A full list of the films scheduled will appear in the fourth progress report, due late September.

members

New memberships as at 20.7.84:

148. Peter Day
149. Tom Lor
150. Lawrence Dean
151. Pete Gilligan
152. Laura Wheatly
153. Steve Lawson
154. Vincent Docherty
155. Oscar Dalgleish
156. Bruce Saville
157. Pete Randall
158. Val Dixon
159. Pete Wright
160. Robert Sneddon
161. Mike Ford
162. Chris Mayers
163. Dave Thomas
164. Wendy Glover
165. Henry John Landis
166. Sylvia Starshine
167. Chris Donaldson
168. Paul Oldroyd
169. Neil Hepple
170. Sue Hepple
171. Eleanor Alexander
172. John Lang
173. Mike Molloy
174. Mike Gould
175. Nigel Robson
176. Ian Sorensen
177. Tibs
178. Dave Caton
179. Patrick Curzon
180. Niel Robinson
181. Christina Lake
182. Peter-Fred Thompson
183. Judy Smith
184. Graham Stulie
185. Dave French
186. Shirley French
187. Steve Devaney
188. Fiona Anderson
189. Lawrence Lambourne
190. Michael Bernardi
191. Niall Gordon
192. Tim Broadribb
193. Katherine Wright
194. Ken Bulmer
195. Alex Armstrong
196. Frances-Jane Nelson
197. Margaret Hall
198. Chuck Connor
199. Hazel Ashworth
200. Mal Ashworth
201. David H. Walters
202. Ros Calverley
203. Barry alan Denning
204. Liz Burak
205. Nick Mills
206. Ian Williams
207. Simon Bailey
208. Anne Warren
209. Jimmy Robertson
210. Sue Harrison
211. Rachel Dickinson
212. Ian
213. Clive Warren
214. Jeanette Warren
215. Simon Ounsley
216. Robert Meades
217. Helen Connor
218. Michael Day
219. Peter Smith
220. Mike Tebby
221. Shelley Hollingsworth
222. Moira Shearman
223. Edmund Jackson
224. Alexander Clarke
225. Abi Frost
226. Philip Dawson
227. Chris Jennings
228. David Wake
229. Brian Aldiss
230. Harry Harrison
231. Nigel Pearson
232. Alison Cook
233. Bruce MacDonald
234. Nigel E. Richardson
235. Malcolm Davies
236. Joe Gibbons
237. Ian McKeer
238. Richard Harris
239. Trevor Mendham
240. Joyce Cluett
241. David Cluett
241½. Adam Cluett
241½. Tricia Cluett
241¾. Daniel Cluett

Inquiries: address on page one.



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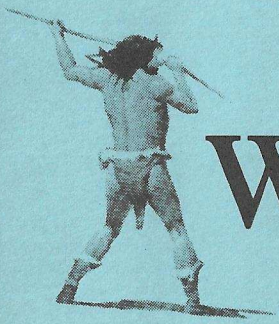
'A literary marvel' — A. E. Van Vogt

'Don't miss it!' — Robert Sheckley



Harry Harrison

West of Eden

SIGNING SESSION
SATURDAY 18th. AUG. — NOON

BM12

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